

others. The second misapplication consists in the inference that the "field" is the church. Christ explains his parable by the statement that "The field is the world." And Paul says: "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." I Cor. 5:12, 13.

Certainly, "God works by love," with all who are willing to be "Workers together with God." And so should the church be also. Even the judgments of the church should be executed in love. Vengeance belongs to the Lord alone; he will repay. But we need be careful that we do not run from one extreme into another; from too much government to no discipline at all. Government is for our good; not for punishment, at least not for torture, on the part of the church.

I observe in EVANGELIST No. 27 that brother V. M. Reichard requests an opinion on the action of the late Virginia Conference. And as he appears to be very much in earnest, and myself regarding the subject of considerable importance, I will speak my piece at once. The action of the conference referred to had escaped my notice, or I would have offered my criticism without solicitation.

In my estimation the brethren transcended their privilege in the action to which Brother R., objects, but I do not believe they did it with an ill intent. They had no doubt noticed the action taken by other State Conferences, having in view the wholesome restraint of the ministry under their jurisdiction.

Under the congregational form of government every fully organized congregation of Christian believers constitutes a church of Christ, possessing all the authority, privileges and immunities for saving souls and glorifying God that any organization ever has had or ever can have delegated to it by the word of God. The foregoing definition of a church may be applied to a single congregation standing alone or when surrounded on all sides by similar institutions.

Any such congregation adopting the New Testament as its creed and discipline with the Tunker idea, namely, that God in his word meant what he said and said what he meant, and assumes the name Brethren, becomes by its own action a congregation of Brethren.

The Lord declared of the first man whom he created, that it was not good for him to be alone, and forthwith proceeded to construct for him, from material closely allied to himself, an additional responsibility. From that day onward Adam was no longer an independent and separate person. And it appears to me that the Savior had the same relation and association in view, when he established his church on earth. How earnestly he poured forth his soul to his Heavenly Father for the union of all his people: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them

also which shall believe on me thru their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in thee and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." John 17:20-23.

Asia had seven such institutions, and each church had an angel and a name of its own. Their names were, Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. Please read what the Spirit said to those churches in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation.

It is very clear to my mind that the Savior contemplated a union of all his churches as actually as the Lord God designed the union of husband and wife in his institution of marriage. Both are for the mutual benefit of his creatures. Nevertheless, in order to maintain man's individuality and free moral agency, no one is compelled, against his own free will and consent, to enter either association; but when once he has entered the kingdom, he will be expected to submit to its law.

God does not dictate to a man whom he shall marry or what church he shall join, or even that he shall marry at all or join any church. Joining church is not a condition of salvation. It is simply a result of obedience to the commands of Christ; a concomitant to salvation, if you please. All the Lord requires of us is to do his will.

Now, not all these thoughts may be relevant to our subject, but we hope their consideration may not be altogether profitless.

There is one point in Brother Reichard's reasoning that does not appear to me exactly logical. For instance: That if conference may regulate a pastor's ordination, it may also act on his coat, hat and hair. There appears to me to be this difference: Ordinations come within the scope of ecclesiastical duties. See Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5. Cutting coats and combing hair does not.

We are indeed brethren. That places us under obligations. It makes each one of us a "brother's keeper." It brings us into the domain of the brotherhood. The laws of the brotherhood require of each one of us, that, "If thy brother trespass against thee, go" have him restored to thee; if he does not hear you the first time, then take two or three others with you and "go" again; if the second effort fails, then get the combined influence of the whole church, and "go," gain thy brother, for thou art thy brother's keeper. Read also James 5:19, 20.

No church organization, local or general, has any jurisdiction over a person until he, by his own free will and accord, surrenders his individual government to it by becoming one of the number. Church membership seems to imply the duty of giving and re-

ceiving advice. This we assume when, as individuals, we accept membership, and as congregations when the churches accept membership in the State Conference, and the State Conferences when they take a place in the National Conference. And the peace and comfort, as well as the welfare and prosperity of individuals, churches and conferences, will all depend on the manner and extent in which those duties are discharged and received. All is intended for and should be performed with the view of the general good of all concerned.

Perhaps the brethren had forgotten, for the time being, that they were acting in the capacity of State Conference instead of the usual church council, when they enacted the obnoxious decision. In congregational council it would have been all right. Each church has full control of its ministers, and can say who shall preach, where, when and what shall be preached. Each church should jealously guard and zealously protect and nourish its ministry; and it is more than likely that the careless and indifferent manner in which this important duty is attended to by the proper custodians, was the cause of the objectional action of the Reliance Conference. If conference had set forth the above facts in a suitable preamble, and then "recommended" or "advised" the congregations within its territory to use the utmost care in the installation of ministers and ordination of elders, and recommended just such a course as it had proposed to enforce, its good intentions would have been much more obvious, and no doubt would have been well received. Even the Annual Meeting of the German Baptists can give "advice only," and no State Conference should assume greater authority. Besides, it is much easier to lead the American Brethren than to drive them. But I would advise forbearance on the part of my dear Brother Reichard. The safety of our institutions lies in our own hands; but "eternal vigilance is the price of our liberty." The same may be said of our church privileges. If we are watchful and faithful, we may protect them; but if we grow weary or indifferent, remain at home and suffer our highest interests to be taken in charge by others, we may expect to lose. If Dr. Reichard had been at the Virginia Conference, we doubt whether the resolution would have been passed; certainly not unanimously.

And as to Brother R's German Baptist friends, (I have a number of the same kind,) who have been on the probationary stool of do nothing, lo these fifteen years, and still continue to wag their knowing heads, I can only say: Do not be alarmed for their sakes. They are evidently good "setters," and fifteen years more will not appear very long to them. They can afford to wait and wag and grow wiser. We need that kind of outside members to watch the outskirts. But let us guard our own institutions for our own sakes and for the sake of our successors.

H. R. HOLSINGER.

Lathrop, Calif.